

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 04930 231301Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PA-02 ICA-20 CIAE-00
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R 231205Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2248

UNCLAS PRETORIA 4930

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: AF
SUBJECT: US RUGBY TEAM MEETS VORSTER

REF: PRETORIA 4591

1. THE AAL-WHITE US TOURING RUGBY TEAM, THE COUGARS, ARRIVED IN PRETORIA AUGUST 18 FOR A MATCH THE FOLLOWING DAY. THE TEAM, WHICH REPORTEDLY INCLUDES SOME MEMBERS OF THE US NATIONAL TEAM, THE EAGLES, HAD TEA WITH PRIME MINISTER JOHN VORSTER AND LATER MET MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PIK BOTHA. IN THE EVENING, THEY JOINED THE MINISTER OF SPORT, PIET KOORNHOF, FOR COCKTAILS.

2. THERE WAS SOME SURPRISE EXPRESSED IN THE LOCAL PRESS THAT NO OFFICIAL FUNCTION WOULD BE HELD FOR THE TEAM. PRESS QUOTED EMB SPOKESMAN AS SAYING THE VISIT WAS "NEITHER ENCOURAGED NOR DISCOURAGED--IN OTHER WORDS, THERE IS NO OFFICIAL STAND." THE SPOKESMAN REPORTEDLY ADDED THAT NO OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS WOULD BE GIVEN BUT THERE WAS NO RESTRICTION ON EMBASSY STAFF ATTENDING THE GAME AS INDIVIDUALS. IN RESPONSE TO WHAT THE NEWSPAPER CALLED "AN ALLEGED BOYCOTT" OF THE TEAM BY US DIPLOMATS, MANAGER K. SEABER, WAS QUOTED IN DIE BEELD AS SAYING THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD "A

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LARGE TASK TO PERFORM AND I AM SURE HE HAS MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO THAN TO MEET A RUGBY TEAM." ANOTHER ACCOUNT QUOTED US RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION SECREATARY, ED LEE, AS SAYING "WE KNOW WE ARE HERE CONTRARY TO THE POLICY OF OUR GOVERNMENT BUT THAT DOESN'T BOTHER US."

3. AS THE FLURRY OVER THEIR MEETINGS AND NON-MEETINGS FADED

QUICKLY AWAY IN PRETORIA THE COUGARS WON THEIR FIRST GAME OF FOUR ON
THE TOUR.
EDMONDSON

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NNN

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